



G5 MarTech Series | Part 1

The Human Element of Multifamily Marketing





Introduction

Welcome, we're glad you're here! The year 2020 was a roller coaster ride. We've emerged from it more agile, empathetic, curious, and at the end of the day, human. So have your renters.

Consumers expect properties to be aware and responsive to their changing needs – which means your marketing should be hyper-focused on the human element of multifamily marketing, aka your renters.

Our new monthly MarTech Series is here to help. From now through June 2021, we'll share monthly reports, webinars, and blogs full of the latest MarTech trends and best-practices. We'll help you bridge the gap between cutting-edge marketing technology (MarTech) and powerful branding to create thoughtfully crafted, frictionless user experiences.

Here's what you can expect to learn from the MarTech Series:

February: Be Authentic: The Online Experience

March: Be Agile: Digital Trends

April: Be Savvy: Technology

May: Be Grounded: Data + CDP

June: Be Creative: Brand + User Experience

Want to get more actionable insights out of this report? Check out our [Online Experience Workbook](#). Your renters are only one click away from thinking “I want to live there,” or “I trust them.” In our increasingly digitally-distracted lives, we know you and your renters don't have time, or clicks, to spare. Let's go.



The Multifamily Online Experience

The Virus That Must Not Be Named is a market disruptor and world shaker-upper. It can seem that the moment we find our feet, and start to feel a little bit more settled, the world around us shifts again, and again...and again. Most things we do these days fit under the larger umbrella of the pandemic-influenced-business-model. But, we've been in this long enough now to pick up on a few multifamily-specific online experiences that are proving helpful when operating in a world of ongoing unknowns.

Virtual Velocity

It's good to remember how quickly "nice-to-have" online experience options changed to "must-have" renter expectations this year. Many of the digital trends we are seeing now weren't necessarily new, but COVID-19 absolutely accelerated the online shopping trend. Shoppers have come to expect a curated experience like those provided by Amazon, Stitch Fix, Netflix, and meal-kit services with build-your-own-menu dining options. According to [McKenzie and Corp](#), this accelerated technology adoption in North America three years ahead of the average rate. With 65% of customer interactions happening online, companies pivoted quickly to adopt technology assisted online offerings.

The Rise of Chatbots

As consumers adopt digital practices, and increase their online-experience expectations, the virtual offerings your property adds now, will pay dividends post-pandemic. Chatbots are no exception. If your team is often bogged-down with repetitive questions like, "Do you have any two bedrooms available?," adding a chatbot to your website might be a great way to solve this challenge.

Today's instant-everything consumers demand immediate answers and this includes your renters. But first, some good news. Using a chatbot on your website has several advantages – they are always ready and they never complain about answering

the same questions over and over. They won't miss an opportunity to provide a warm, welcoming first impression of your property's digital presence. This allows your sales team to focus on high-impact discussions with future renters, all while making sure simple questions such as work-from-home amenities, pricing, and availability don't get lost in the shuffle. A chatbot streamlines your team's ability to provide consistent, friendly customer service and increase occupancy.



Four Perks of Chatbots

Six-feet apart is the new norm and we need to engage with renters in safe, respectful ways before they look elsewhere. Here are four benefits of using a chatbot to answer future renters' questions.

01 Efficiency + Efficacy

Your renters don't want to wait very long for you to get around to answering their questions. Rest assured, if you aren't efficient with replies, they've crossed your property off the, "I want to live there" list. Chatbots allow future renters to explore floor plans, watch tour videos, view photos, and reach out for a contactless or virtual appointment. Bots are also extremely effective, answering up to [80% of a prospect's questions](#). Above all, a chatbot frees your onsite team to focus their attention toward move-in-ready renters.

“66% of customers found their questions were answered most quickly via online chat.”

(North Ridge Group, 2019)

02 Speedy Service

It's no secret that our attention spans are shrinking. As your renters' lives become more digitally-distracted, we need a speedy way to answer future renters' questions. The average chatbot's response time is less than 2 seconds, compared to the average human response time of 76 seconds. Consumers expect immediacy, and a 74 second difference can feel like an eternity and be off-putting. Moreover, according to [Northridge Group's State of Customer Service Experience Report](#), 66% of customers found their questions were answered most quickly via online chat. And, 48% of renters say they would use online chat during their next apartment search, according to the [National Multifamily Housing Council \(NMHC\) Kingsley Report](#). If you aren't able to answer future renters' questions within an hour, many may reach out to your property via a different channel, essentially doubling your team's workload.

03 Always-On

A chatbot is that mythical teammate who can answer questions flawlessly and never needs a day off — or a break. They're attentive and waiting to warmly greet future renters day, night, weekends, and



they can simplify the research process for renters. Your renters, and future renters, have more on their plates than ever before as they juggle working, and their children learning, from home. When you add in navigating pandemic precautions and searching for a new place to live – it's a lot to handle. They may not have time to research your property, and ask their most pressing questions when your office is open, but a chatbot meets them where they are, and moves their conversations with your property forward.

04 Everywhere

Did you know a chatbot can live anywhere on the internet including on social media channels? This allows you to extend a warm, memorable, human-esque interaction to prospective renters before they even get to your website. Social media usage is increasing, and overall time spent online is also on the rise. A chatbot that can reach prospects – on listing and review sites like GMB, social media channels like Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as staff email signatures, and your website – ensures a consistent experience for searching renters.



G5 BOT

In a recent data study, G5's virtual assistant, G5 Bot, greeted 3,000 prospects in an average month for a single location. In that time, it had 400 conversations, answered 1,100 questions, delivered 25 leads, and booked 12 appointments that resulted in 11 tours (a 92% show rate). Applying the industry standard tour-to-lease conversion of 35%, this resulted in 3.8 additional leases per month. The numbers don't lie. Bots work.





Contact Us, Contactless

COVID-19 brought with it a focus on cleanliness, and the need to establish new procedures for virus transmission precautions. This led to the virtual world of contactless interactions we probably didn't imagine pre-pandemic: Zoom meetings, dining out via online ordered takeout, social media streamed "live" music, endless webinars, and the #2020classic Zoom birthday parties. We are getting better at navigating this digitally-distracted world day-by-day. Here are a few contactless channels your property might consider expanding in order to connect with renters.

"45% of renters in search of a new apartment, visit a prospective property's social media accounts."

(NMHC Kingsley Report, 2020)

01 Social Media

The truth is, we don't really know what the world will look like after the pandemic. People have looked toward social media to stay connected and up-to-date with friends and family. Social media can make us feel like we're together, even if we aren't. We're craving connection and as a result, [social media usage is up](#), with just about half of users spending more time scrolling through their phones. Moreover, according to the [NMHC Kingsley Report](#), 45% of renters in search of a new apartment, visit a prospective property's social media accounts. So, share fun, timely ideas to stand out on these platforms.

Consider posting ideas that engage both your renters and future renters, including step-by-step instructions on crafty seasonal decor, simple recipes with affordable ingredients, DIY work-from-home space ideas,

productivity tips, and ways to properly store produce to get the most out of grocery runs. Are any local gyms offering video streaming classes? Consider partnering with a local business to provide fitness amenities your property may have previously offered, or is offering at a reduced capacity. Share photos and good news within your property, and remind your renters of your property's continued value.

If you don't already, it might be a great opportunity to consider doing more paid, or sponsored social media content. As a rule of thumb, you want to be where your renters are — paid social operates this way as well. Do an audit of your social media accounts, see which channels drive the most engagement, and then allocate appropriate amounts to each channel to encourage conversation in this specific engaging space.

02 Virtual Tours

Touring a property is an important step in a renter's journey. According to [NMHC Kingsley Report](#), 86% of renters won't rent an apartment sight unseen. Pre-pandemic most renters appreciated a guided tour, but things have changed. Virtual tour options allow future renters to learn more about your property in a safe, accommodating way. In fact, according to [NMHC Kingsley Report](#), many renters prefer contactless tours because they are more convenient with their schedule. Additionally, the report shows that unit photos, unit location within the property, and photos of shared spaces, are all things renters need to make mostly-virtual decisions.

03 Self-Guided Tours

A close relative to virtual tours, self-guided tours are skyrocketing. They empower prospective renters, and allow them to envision living at your property. Self-guided tours are safe, convenient, and accommodate the needs of modern renters. Self-guided tours allow prospects to tour at their own pace, freely talk with a roommate or partner, and lower the pressure of having a property representative there to influence their decision-making process.

Your property likely earns bonus points if they're able to schedule online as well. While self-guided

tours may sound fancy, or like they require a ton of new infrastructure, we'd ask you to consider a couple of simple solutions that are working well for properties. Option one, your property installs contactless entry keypads on vacant units, and emails the prospect a code to enter the unit. You're then able to change the code after the unit has been toured so that the prospective renter will no longer have access to the unit. Option two, simply unlock the unit's door 20 minutes prior to the appointment, and then lock it back up after the tour. Some properties prefer prospective renters to wear lanyards, or other means of identification, indicating that they're touring the property. The key is to select which solutions are best suited for your property.

04 Video Content

Did you know that [54% of consumers want to see more video content](#) from a brand or business they support? Video content is a great addition to any virtual tour offerings at your property. Consider recording: interviews with staff members, renter testimonials, and tours of both apartment floor plans and community spaces (indoors and outdoors). This content allows future renters to understand the essence of your property and envision what their life would feel like if they decide to call your property home. Editing the videos down into bite-size chunks empowers future renters to choose their own adventure and access the information they are most curious about. The hidden bonus is that they can revisit your video content as needed during their decision-making process.





Homebody Amenities

Renters are home more than they ever have been. According to [Gallup](#), 58% of Americans are working remotely at least some of the time. They're at home, making bread, and working from the couch. We're not kidding. In 2020, searches for bread machines were up 652% and lap desks up 100%. To enjoy after work outdoor happy hours, searches for patio heaters are up 600%. It goes without saying that renters are interested in up-leveling the quality of life their home provides. As such, the amenities they're seeking may look a little different than in past years. Long story short, the homebody movement is here and has brought a strong focus on essentials.

01 Outdoors Are In

This past summer, Americans got geared up to get out. According to the [NPD Group](#), bike sales grew by 63%, paddle sports by 56%, and golf by 51% year-over-year this past-summer. We expect trends like these to continue, but to be more climate-specific through the winter. Do you have properties in wintery areas? Your residents are likely investing in snow shoes, hiking boots, and a warm coat to continue their outdoor adventures. In cooler climates, gas fire pits and s'mores might facilitate socially-distanced and safe winter-weather gatherings. In warmer climates, the patio table is the new dining table and



02 Home Is the New Office

parks are the latest gym. What does this mean for apartments? People are seeking outdoor spaces at home and near their homes. Is your property near a park, bike path, or other green space? Does it have a balcony, patio, or other outdoor space? Include information about these spaces on your property's website to appeal to renter needs, show up in search, and stand out from your competitors.

As more of the workforce is pushed from the office building to their living room, renters are seeking work-from-home amenities, like high-speed internet, built-in workspaces, and soundproof walls. In fact, according to [NMHC Kingsley Report](#), more than 90% of respondents would not rent without soundproof walls and high-speed internet access in 2020. Include staged work-from-home spaces in your property photos to show that you're ready to meet your renters' needs.

03 Reliable Cell Phone Service

In the stay-at-home era, our cell phones are a sanity saver as they allow us to connect with friends and family. Perhaps your renters used to live busy, hectic, modern lives, and in all honesty, maybe they weren't home all that much. As we know, they've likely been home more than ever, and reliable cell phone service ranks as their number one community amenity. In fact, 91% of renters say they won't rent without this feature, according to [NMHC Kingsley Report](#). Double-check how reliable the cell phone service is at your property, and then make adjustments like providing free high-speed wireless internet to units that have spotty cell phone service to meet renters' needs.

04 Individually Focused

Renters are seeking more individual-based amenities versus community-level amenities. Amenities like in-unit laundry or in-unit ductless split systems to individually heat and cool apartments, without sharing air with other units, are in high demand. In fact, according to the Amenities Reevaluated in Post-Pandemic Times session at NAA APTVirtual in November 2020, in-unit laundry searches have increased by 60% year-over-year. Pandemic-renters don't really care if you have a beautiful gym with the best equipment, or an Olympic-sized swimming pool, if they can't access these spaces with confidence in their health and safety. Instead, offer up some of

the more portable equipment on a check out basis, similar to library books. Your renters can pick up equipment like dumbbells, yoga mats, resistance bands, and inflatable fitness balls, and return them within a set window of time. Did you offer fitness classes before? Can you partner with local gyms to offer at-home, on-demand, or streamed fitness classes to temporarily replace amenities like your fitness center?



Backed by the Best

Contactless options need to be backed with a cutting-edge, performance-centric website. At G5, we believe marketing matters more than ever. That's why we invest in innovation that makes finding, engaging, and renting from your properties a breeze. We're here to help you navigate this ongoing unknown, and give you the insights to make data-backed decisions that will guide you to our next new normal.



Be Human:

The Multifamily Online Experience

What a wild ride. COVID-19 stopped the world in its tracks, shuttered economies, and ripped the rug out from under our feet. We are social beings and as we navigate the ongoing pandemic, many of our traditional ways of connecting and reaching each other are off the table. With a limited arsenal of tools to connect with your future renters, it's important to humanize your online experience, to provide the same warm, memorable interaction your property would typically provide in-person. Many of these changes may have seemed like a temporary situation in March 2020, but it's now been nearly a year. And, even with good news like vaccines we can't simply, "wait until COVID is over," because these shifts in consumer behavior are likely to stick.

We don't have a crystal ball, and we don't know what the next few weeks and months will bring, but we do know that extra empathy and transparency from your property goes a long way.



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